

Illinois Director Credential

Early Childhood/School-Age Content Areas

Administrators need a strong foundation in the fundamentals of early childhood and school-age development in order to guide the instructional practices of teachers and support staff. Administrators should have an understanding of theory and practice for children from birth through age 12, and their families. The seven content areas described below encompass the breadth of knowledge and skill needed. Examples of demonstrated competencies follow each content area.

Human Growth and Development (HGD)

Administrators use current and emerging principles, theories, and knowledge of developmental milestones as a foundation for all aspects of their work with children and their families. Administrators need to know and understand how children develop and learn through play and across all domains of development. They use their knowledge and understanding as they plan and implement observations, teaching/learning interactions, and collaborations with staff, families, and other team members.

- Demonstrate knowledge of stages and defining characteristics of children’s development across all domains.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the role of teachers and families in promoting and supporting healthy development.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the contributions of important developmental theorists (e.g., Piaget, Vygotsky, Skinner, Montessori, etc.).
- Demonstrate knowledge of the role and function of play in children’s development.

Health, Safety, and Well-Being (HSW)

Administrators understand that children’s physical health, mental health, emotional health, and safety are the foundations for development and learning in children. They acknowledge the value of creating a healthful environment to foster children’s physical, cognitive, language, and social-emotional development in collaboration with staff, families, and health professionals. Administrators take responsibility for providing multiple opportunities for children to learn habits that will ensure their health, safety, and well-being.

- Develop and/or implement a plan to prevent disease transmission through proper hygiene, universal precautions, daily health checks, and immunizations.
- Develop and/or implement a plan to prevent child abuse and neglect by promoting an understanding of child development, appropriate child rearing and care-giving practices, and the need for regular prevention trainings regarding child abuse and neglect.
- Demonstrate competency in infant, child and adult CPR and first aid.
- Develop and/or implement a nutrition program that includes physical activities, nutritional education and healthy food choices.

Observation and Assessment (OA)

Administrators need to understand and value the role of informal and formal observation and assessment. They take responsibility for using a variety of developmentally, linguistically, socio-economically, and culturally appropriate assessments to gather and share information on each child’s skills, abilities, interests, and needs. Administrators use assessment to monitor children’s progress and to continually evaluate and adapt teaching practices and learning environments.

- Evaluate the appropriateness of different assessment tools for children of varying ages, ability levels, culture, and linguistic backgrounds.
- Document a child’s growth using anecdotal observations, time sampling journals, developmental checklists, child self-assessment, and portfolios.
- Interpret data generated from formal, standardized instruments.
- Develop and/or implement a plan that maintains confidentiality and reflects ethical standards in assessment practice.

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Curriculum or Program Design (CPD)

Administrators have broad knowledge of appropriate curriculum and program design for children. They view curriculum or program design development as a collaborative and dynamic professional endeavor. They take responsibility for planning and providing an emerging, anti-bias, integrated curriculum or program design to build on each child's current abilities and interests to expand competence in all content areas and developmental domains.

- Articulate the rationale and distinguishing features of different curricular or program design approaches (e.g., Developmentally Appropriate Practice, Montessori, Reggio Emilia, High/Scope, Project Approach, etc.).
- Develop and/or implement curriculum or program design goals that build on the interests of children.
- Develop and/or implement instructional plans that accommodate individual children's needs and varying developmental levels.
- Evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of different curricula or program designs.
- Demonstrate knowledge of Individual Education Plans (IEP) and Individual Family Service Plans (IFSP) and how to collaborate in their implementation.
- Develop and/or implement appropriate intervention/enrichment plans and strategies for diverse children.

Interactions, Relationships, and Environments (IRE)

Administrators use their understanding of developmentally appropriate interactions and environments to provide integrated learning opportunities to children. They support staff in the utilization of personal interactions that guide each child toward positive developmental and learning outcomes. Administrators provide and support physical and social environments that are nurturing, aesthetically pleasing, and intellectually stimulating. They also support environments and teaching/learning interactions that are responsive to each child's abilities, interests, and needs, and reflect appreciation of family and community.

- Demonstrate how spatial environments and instructional strategies are modified to accommodate ability diverse children.
- Demonstrate knowledge of how to implement learning centers that promote active engagement in learning.
- Demonstrate knowledge of effective strategies for promoting oral and written language development for all children, including English Language Learners (ELL).
- Develop and/or implement a plan for setting developmentally appropriate expectations for child behavior.
- Evaluate individual and group management strategies to address behavioral challenges.
- Use effective communication strategies to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.
- Demonstrate knowledge of effective strategies such as redirection, positive reinforcement, modeling, conflict resolution, problem-solving, encouragement, and natural consequences as appropriate to the situation.
- Develop and/or implement a plan for an environment that encourages children's social-emotional development, self-discipline, and acceptable expressions of emotion.

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Family and Community Relationships (FCR)

Administrators understand and value positive, collaborative partnerships with staff, families, colleagues, and the community. They respect varied perspectives and demonstrate integrity in conveying their own personal and professional values. Administrators use their knowledge of family and social systems to create reciprocal, productive relationships that recognize and enhance the contributions of family, program staff, and community representatives in the development and well-being of children.

- Develop and/or implement a plan to create and sustain family partnerships, including a family involvement program.
- Develop and/or implement intake procedures for soliciting parents' choices and goals for their children and their families.
- Develop and/or implement a plan to communicate with families using a variety of methods (e.g., notes, newsletters, bulletin boards, phone calls, conferences, photos, portfolios, and electronic media).
- Develop and/or implement a plan that respects family beliefs, cultures, and languages and makes appropriate accommodations to promote consistency between home and program.
- Develop and/or implement a plan to identify supportive services for all families, including those of diverse ability.

Personal and Professional Development (PPD)

Administrators identify themselves as professionals and conduct themselves as members of a significant, expanding, and evolving profession. They respect diversity in cultures, beliefs, and practices. Administrators know and value the history and contributions of their profession and its related fields. They advocate for children and their families, and exemplify the ethical standards of their profession in their personal and professional interactions and activities.

- Demonstrate knowledge of how research influences early childhood and/or school-age policy and practice.
- Articulate how investments in early childhood and/or school-age education can provide the foundation for societal change.
- Participate in professional organizations.
- Work with other early childhood and school-age professionals to improve the status of the professions.
- Formulate a personal philosophy of early childhood/school-age care and education.